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COVID-19	February 2
TAKE	48,73,824 deaths
SHOT	February 3
TOTAL DEATHS	50,71,756 deaths
NATIONWIDE	FEB 2 FEB 3
Fresh cases	1,61,366 1,72,433
Recoveries	2,81,009 2,59,107
Deaths	1,733 1,008
KARNATAKA	FEB 2 FEB 3
Fresh cases	20,505 16,436
Recoveries	40,903 44,819
Deaths	81 60



EDUCATION MINISTRY ISSUES S.O.Ps FOR SCHOOL REOPENING

States can decide whether schools need to obtain parents' consent for physical classes, the revised guidelines said

ENSURE SOCIAL DISTANCING, MASKING

Masks are must and the seating arrangement should be made in such a manner that there should be at least 6 feet distance between two students, the advisory said. Social distancing must also be maintained in the staff rooms, office area, assembly hall and other common areas. Plus, schools must ensure proper sanitation of its premises and buses

SCHOOLS OPEN IN 11 STATES, CLOSED IN 9

Schools are partially open for higher classes in 16 states, Union education ministry said, adding that 95% of teaching and non-teaching staff in all states has been vaccinated

Students willing to study from home with the consent of their parents may be allowed to do so, the advisory said

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MANIPAL TOLL-FREE HELPLINE NO. FOR STUDENTS' PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VAYANAD • BENGALURU • KODI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOTCHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SANGALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPUR • KOTTAIYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THIRUSSUR • KALABURGI

Decades after ban, Devadasi system lives on surreptitiously in homes

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

IN the boondocks of Karnataka, there are reportedly around 80,000 women, almost all Dalits, who were "forcefully dedicated" to a life of prostitution before a temple deity at the age of 12-13 years in the presence of their mothers, most of who are former

Devadasis, and other senior Devadasis. The state banned the social evil tradition under the Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982, which was enforced in 1984.

"The ban only pushed dedication out of the temple premises to homes of these highly vulnerable girls from Dalit families,

where dedications still happen, albeit clandestinely once a year on Bharatha Hunimma in February," said T Ramanjaneya, Project Director, Sneha, a voluntary organisation working for advocacy and empowerment of former Devadasis and their children in Koppala and Ballari in North Karnataka.



Daughters of former Devadasis undergo skill training from Children of India Foundation | CHILDREN OF INDIA FOUNDATION

During a visit to Hosapete in Ballari district early this week, this reporter met some former Devadasis, their children and people. Many people who *TNIE* spoke to, said on condition of anonymity that the dedications still happen, but at homes and under cover. "There was some information last year regard-

ing dedication of two girls in the taluk. They disappeared after the information was leaked," said a local who is privy to the information.

"Many a times, the families of these girls are complicit. They hide the girls. Some of them surface once they get pregnant," added another source. NGOs

like Sneha, in partnership with 'Children Getting out of Devadasi System' (GOOD), and supported by Terre des Hommes, the Netherlands, in India are "working to stop further dedication, and help in empowering women along with other groups," said Vasudev Sharma of Child Rights Trust. **P5**

Counterpunch to Winter Olympics snub by China

Envoy won't attend opening, closing events

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

PIQUED by China's poke to make a Galwan officer the torchbearer of the Winter Olympics that begins on Friday, India hit back by deciding that its Ambassador will not attend the opening and closing ceremonies of the event in Beijing.

"It is regrettable that China has tried to politicise the Galwan issue by appointing a PLA regiment commander Qi Fabao as the torchbearer of the Winter Olympics," foreign office spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said.

Shortly thereafter, Shashi Shekhar Vempati, Prasar Bharati CEO, tweeted, "Consequent to the announcement by @meaindia, @ddsportschannel will not telecast live the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics being held in Beijing."

The shadow boxing came around the time an investigative report by *The Klaxon*, an Australian media house, called out China for gross under-reporting of its toll during the Galwan clash with Indian soldiers on the Ladakh border on June 15-16, 2020. While China claimed only four of its soldiers were killed, *Klaxon* said the real figure could be as much as 38.

Shameful: US Senator

"It is shameful that Beijing chose a torchbearer for the Winter Olympics 2022 who is part of a military command that attacked India in 2020," said US Senator Jim Risch, a Republican

The report was based on research by a group of unnamed social media researchers, including Chinese bloggers, and media reports that have since been purged by China. The clash, it said, began over a temporary bridge India built to counter Chinese infrastructure construction on the buffer area along the Line of Actual Control. As many as 20 Indian soldiers died in Galwan. As for Qi Fabao, he suffered head injuries.

India has already named Pradeep Kumar Rawat as its next envoy to China. Till he takes charge, Vikram Misri will continue to be the envoy in Beijing. The UK, US, Australia and Canada have already announced a diplomatic boycott of the event.

India's lone participant at the event is Arif Khan, a skier from Kashmir. His manager, Abbas Wani, tested positive for Covid upon landing in Beijing but was asymptomatic. A repeat test cleared him of Covid.

PRIVATISATION POLICY SHIFT FROM FUNDS TO GROWTH: FINANCE SECY

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

THE government's approach towards privatisation has changed. The approach now is to do privatisations which are economically important, and result in increased productivity, employment and growth. "Our approach is to use disinvestment as a policy instrument to increase productivity, employment and growth not as means of filling the revenue gaps," Union finance secretary T V Somanathan told this newspaper.

He was responding to a question on why the disinvestment target for FY23 was drastically cut.

For the next financial year, the government has set a target of ₹65,000 crore. The target was ₹1.75 lakh crore in the last Budget but it was later revised to ₹78,000 crore after the BPCL privatisation failed to get completed during the year.

"We have chosen to be realistic in what can really be realised. If we force them (DIPAM officials), they will say let's sell 5% here and 10% there to achieve the target of ₹1.75 lakh crore. We are not desperate for the last paise. We want them to do the difficult tasks like disinvestment of Air India," Somanathan added.

Somanathan explained that Air India has not brought the government much money, but its economic impact is huge — it saved the government ₹20 crore a day opportunity cost and helped revive the airline industry.

'Crypto will never be a legal tender'

Cryptocurrencies will never be a legal tender, said Union Finance Secretary T V Somanathan, clearing the air on the legality of private digital currencies. He said cryptos are like diamond and gold, which are valuable but not a legal tender. Only RBI's digital rupee will be a legal tender

Hijab row now erupts in Kundapur govt college

VINCENT D'SOUZA & PRAKASH SAMAGA @ Mangaluru, Udupi

THE controversy over college students wearing headscarves in classrooms seems to be escalating rather than seeing a resolution, with another government PU college in Udupi district denying entry to a group of girls students on Thursday. This comes even as some students of a government PU College in Udupi city are fighting for their 'constitutional right' after they were denied entry into classrooms with headscarves. One of them have also moved the High Court over the issue.

On Thursday, a video went viral, which showed Ram-



The principal of the Government PU College in Kundapur talks to the students who came wearing the hijab on Thursday | EXPRESS

akrishna, principal of the Government PU College at Kundapur, closing the gates on 28 hijab-clad students as they tried to enter the campus. The girls have been attending classes with headscarves for long. **CONTINUED ON: P4**

MYSTERY BAG

Student caught trying to sneak in girlfriend into hostel in luggage

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Udupi

A student of the Manipal Institute of Technology was caught by security guards while he was trying to sneak in his girlfriend into the hostel by stuffing her in a trolley bag.

Sources said that the student, residing in the men's hostel, has a girlfriend from a commerce institute who stays in the women's hostel located on the same campus. On Wednesday afternoon, when he was entering the men's hostel with the trolley bag, the security guards at the entrance got suspicious and asked him to open it up. He was initially reluctant, but gave in when the guards stood their ground. When he opened the bag, the girlfriend popped out of it.

Sources said the boy wanted to spend some time with the girl and convinced her about his plan to take her to his hostel room. The internal disciplinary committee of Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) has taken action against the boy and the girl for violating college rules. **CONTINUED ON: P2**

EXPRESS READ

Param Pravega: IISc gets new supercomputer

BENGALURU: As part of the National Supercomputing Mission, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has installed one of the most powerful supercomputers in India, 'Param Pravega'. This is also the largest supercomputer to be installed at an Indian academic institute. **P2**

Shots fired at Owaisi's car in UP, one arrested

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

TWO persons were arrested in connection with the attack on Hyderabad MP and leader of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) Asaduddin Owaisi on Thursday. The miscreants fired at the AIMIM chief's vehicle near Chhajjars toll plaza at Pilkhuwa on the Meerut-Delhi Expressway in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh on Thursday.

Owaisi, who was returning to Delhi after addressing a poll meeting in Kithaur in Meerut, was not hurt in the incident. He tweeted photos of his car with bullet marks and claimed 3-4 persons fired four rounds. He said his convoy came under fire when the vehicles slowed near the toll plaza. "My car got punctured, but I got out in another car and left. We are all safe," he tweeted.

However, police believe there were only two attackers.

"On the basis of CCTV footages, one of the attackers was identified as Sachin Kumar. The second, Shubham, was also arrested soon after. Both are in their early 20s," said ADG (law and order) Prashant Kumar. Both have been booked for attempt to murder and possessing illegal arms.

During initial interrogation, the accused said they took the step as they were hurt by Owaisi's speech about Hindus, sources said.

Meanwhile, Owaisi demanded an inquiry into the incident by the Election Commission.



HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM

State sore with startup ranking; asserts B'luru's No. 1 position

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE latest Economic Survey has declared New Delhi as the country's startup capital, taking into account the number of startups that were added between 2019 and 2021, but Karnataka asserts that Namna Bengaluru is numero uno when it comes to the start-up ecosystem and unicorns.

Dismayed over the Centre's report that only took into account the number of start-ups registered — 5,000 in the national capital compared to 4,514 in Bengaluru between April 2019 and December 2021 — the State Government and also experts feel that a number of other

parameters that help to grow a city as a global startup hub need to be taken into consideration.

Some are also of the view that it is an unfair comparison, as the NCR region is much larger compared to Bengaluru city.

Bengaluru is home to the highest number of unicorns and is compared with cities like New York, Berlin and Tel Aviv. Of the 85 unicorns in India, 34 are based in Bengaluru and 25 of them emerged between April 2019 and December 2021, sources in the government said, backing up the argument that Bengaluru is indeed the startup capital. **CONTINUED ON: P4**



Bengaluru is a startup hub that has adapted all factors and is on par with any of the global startup hubs

Dr CN Ashwath Narayan, IT/BI Minister

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